

## Ozark Bathhouse

From the early 1870s to the great fire of 1878, the Weir and George Bathhouse occupied the site of the Ozark Bathhouse. This frame house, typical of the early bathhouses, probably would have fallen down due to decay if the fire hadn't destroyed it first.

The first Ozark Bathhouse derived its name from the surrounding mountain range then considered to be a part of the Ozark range but now known as the Ouachita Mountains. This elegant Victorian structure was roomy and comfortable, but it was also built of wood and subject to rotting and fire just as the earlier primitive bathhouses were. The present fire-resistant brick and stucco Ozark Bathhouse replaced the Victorian structure. Designed by architects Mann and Stern of Little Rock, the bathhouse was completed in the summer of 1922, just a few months after the Quapaw opened for business. The owners rejected three earlier Mann and Stern designs considered too grand and expensive. Built at a cost of \$93,000 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the building is set between low towers whose receding windows suggest the nascent Art Deco movement. The prominence of the towers was lessened during the 1942 renovation that brought the building's wings forward in line with the front porch, which was enclosed at the same time. The plaster-cast window boxes are unique on Bathhouse Row. The cartouches on both sides of the front are of the scroll and shield type with the center symbol described as The Tree of Health or The Tree of Life. Like the Quapaw, the Ozark was more impressive in its exterior facade than in its interior appointments, with only 14,000 square feet and twenty-seven tubs. It catered to a middle economic class of bathers unwilling to pay for frills. The Ozark closed in 1977. A painted wooden porch enclosure was removed in the late 1990s to return the building to its original appearance.



First Ozark Bathhouse